

**Chapter
Three**

Connected Reading in Practice



Reading each morning starts for me, as for many other professionals, with what I hope will be just a quick glance at my email. Skimming the additions to my inbox, I make sure there are no issues that need my immediate, personal attention. Then I move on to the second tier of messages that include announcements, email newsletters, listserv responses, and other personal correspondence. Despite my efforts to reduce spam and clutter, there are still many items that must simply be deleted. Shifting my attention, I look carefully at some of the headlines from NCTE's INBOX, Edutopia's newsletter, and a daily summary of education news, clicking on one or two articles to read them more carefully. Of course, messages that require a response stay in my inbox; everything else is archived. Once I have made my inbox manageable using this utilitarian set of reading skills, I move on with my morning, knowing exactly what messages I can read again and respond to later.



Remember that all links and handouts are located on the companion wiki. Scan this QR code or go to <http://connectedreading.wikispaces.com> to access Chapter 3 materials.

Throughout this chapter, by way of these brief interludes, we share glimpses of our own reading practices, as well as those of two of the students we interviewed. In our reflections, we have tried to document both what we read as well as reasons for why and how we read and, in the spirit of the larger argument we are making in this book, how we share our reading. We offer these anecdotes to show Connected Reading practices in action, and we invite you to think about your reading, too, through the use of sidebar questions embedded throughout the chapter.

While choices about what and how to read have always been mediated by time, space, and access, your choices as a reader have become more numerous in a digital age. Sometimes the reason for a choice in the medium of text is simple: it is available only in digital or in print form. Other times a reader makes a conscious choice between digital and physical text. For instance, a copy of *English Journal* arrives in the mail, but for Troy it is more useful to download the journal on his iPad because he can then carry it—as well as about half a dozen other articles—as a digital copy to be read at convenient times. Kristen, on the other hand, grabs the paper version for her train ride because it is lighter than her iPad in her already heavy commuter bag.

Questions about what, how, and when to read dominate our lives. Do I buy that new book and have it shipped in two days? Or do I download it now? Or do I get on the waiting list at the library? Is this news story worth a deep reading now, or do I tag it and come back later? And though we admit that not everyone begins the day as Troy does, curating email and digital headlines, our strong hunch is that you (and your students) do cross boundaries between print and digital text many times and throughout the day.

Kristen's father-in-law, for instance, recently described to her his mixed reading practices. In the car, he listens to an audio version of a book; at home he picks up where the audio left off by reading a print version. By the end of the book, he has traversed both media to draw meaning from the text, and he can't discern from which media he "read" which parts of the book. We know he is not alone in his ability to navigate multiple forms of text or in his desire to do so (and that companies such as Amazon and Audible have now teamed up to make the transition from reading to listening automatic), and we hope you will take this opportunity to consider how you (and your students) have developed the ability and inclination to read many kinds of texts.



Once my family's morning routines are underway, I also peek at my Twitter notifications to see if there is anything I should be reading, though I don't have a ton of time to spend reading while hustling kids to get ready for school. Before I leave the house, however, it is likely that I will spend at least another few minutes looking

through the headlines that have come in via my RSS reader of choice, Feedly. Long gone are the days of walking out to the mailbox in the morning to retrieve a paper. Instead, the headlines from our local paper—owned by an international conglomerate—as well as various other news sources, bloggers, and Google alerts that I have set up all come to my Feedly account.

Knowing that at certain sites I can read only a few of the stories each month that are available in front of the pay-wall, I choose wisely from the major news sources. Also, I look to see what other colleagues have posted to their blogs, especially items related to technology and writing. My Google Alerts for “technology and education” as well as “writing and education” round out my Feedly reading list. I see that, as with my email, I have many unread feeds. Like that nagging inbox, I see dozens or even hundreds of unread stories, but I have to make choices about what to read each day, so I simply let these go.

What We Read: Digital Text Types



I have grown as a digital reader over the last few years, but I yearn to be fluid in my curating, annotating, and archiving of texts. More often than not, I am overwhelmed by the amount of information that comes across my desk. With hundreds of emails in my personal and professional inboxes (I play many roles in life and so have many accounts that align with those roles), stacks of both virtual and paper articles, and pages and pages of student writing to be read, I find little time to manage social networks and RSS feeds. Though I have a Twitter account where I have curated a personal learning network, I read it sparingly, focusing my attention mostly on Facebook, where I connect with professional colleagues, friends, and family. Once or twice a day, I scan my news feed and click on articles that interest me, opening them in new tabs on my Internet browser so I can read them at a convenient time. Sometimes I read ebooks on my iPad, often bingeing by downloading three or four at a time from my local public library. More often than not, however, I have a stack of unfinished paperbacks on my nightstand. For me, the choice is not a preference of digital or print; it is a matter of time and energy for reading and what I have available to me in the moment.

Kristen’s reading practices reflect those of many people who feel tugged in different directions and overwhelmed by the possibilities of the Internet for providing texts across devices and platforms. In contrast to Trevor (Figure 3.1), who describes distractions as a form of entertainment—and we agree that reading can and should sometimes be leisurely and for pleasure—Kristen is distracted by competing priorities, most often for professional purposes. From the latest social network posts to related links on a Web-based article, readers never lack for a variety of digital texts from which to choose. But how do we read those texts? What textual features influence our choices and processes?

Figure 3.1. A profile of Trevor as a reader.

Trevor, a sophomore, likes comics, mysteries, and the Diary of a Wimpy Kid series. He has read several of the books in that series. Reading a novel can be pleasurable for him, yet he says that “I’m not that big of a reader, but I like novels here and there. Only certain novels grab my attention.” Instead,

I’d rather read on the computer, but in a way, I’d rather read in a book because the computer can distract you. But it’s more like, it’s like a feeling that you have when you read it on a computer more than with a book. Like when you’re reading it in a book, it’s kind of dead, like you really don’t feel everything as much as [on] the computer.

Even though he enjoys this type of reading, Trevor recognizes that he can become distracted on a computer: “Sometimes I get off-task. If I see like an ad or something, I’ll click on the ad, or I want to go on Facebook or websites. And like it gets me distracted from what I’m supposed to be doing.”

Trevor manages this distraction in a few ways. One strategy is to start with homework, or as he says, “Homework first and then you could have fun or whatever.” When possible, he reads homework assignments on the iPad because “you can’t multitask with the iPad; . . . you’re forced to stay on-task because if you have to exit out . . . sometimes it will close the page and you will lose everything.” He also uses a “parent app” to keep himself locked in his assigned task. Though distraction is a constant struggle, he says, “I’m getting better and better at staying on-task.”

After he completes his homework, Trevor is free to read what interests him, including articles about newly released games, strategies for game play, and the news. He reads news articles two to three times a week so that he can “know what’s happening around my surroundings.” He finds these articles serendipitously on his Yahoo homepage or through purposeful searches. Sometimes he does these searches based on stories he hears in his Global History class. As he says, “I take it a step further to see for myself what happened.”

Like many teens, Trevor uses Facebook, the only social network to which he belongs. He scrolls through his news feed and will read further if “it’s someone that’s very important to me. . . . [T]hen I’ll read it so I can be more involved with them and help them.” Sometimes he will use Google to further research a comment on Facebook “so I find the information for myself.” These three avenues—Facebook, Yahoo, and purposeful searching based on face-to-face conversations—lead him to much of his out-of-school reading.

Though he admits that books help him to be less distracted, and he does read novels in print form, Trevor would rather read on a tablet or computer because “those things bring me entertainment.” Like all readers, especially those of us now using digital devices, Trevor balances a variety of choices and priorities, pursuing topics of academic and personal interest while also struggling with distractions that are meant primarily for pleasure.

Each of these glimpses into a reading life—Troy’s, Kristen’s, and Trevor’s—highlights a number of the questions we face about when, where, and how to read. We have developed a set of questions in the sidebar that you can use to explore your own reading life. As we move forward in this chapter, we are specifically interested in the kinds of reading that come in the form of digital texts, either because these readings are born-digital texts (e.g., websites, interactive ebooks) or because it is more convenient for us to read them as digital texts (e.g., a newspaper article or basic ebook). To explore these ideas further, we first identify and then think through the affordances and constraints offered by various forms of digital texts.

In their chapter “The Changing Landscape of Text and Comprehension in the Age of New Literacies,” Dalton and Proctor (2008) articulate four varieties of “digital texts,” a set of distinctions that are useful for us to consider as we think about the kinds of texts we and our students encounter each day. They describe the following:

- “linear text in digital format,” such as a novel downloaded from Project Gutenberg or purchased from Amazon
- “non linear text with hyperlinks,” such as a webpage with links to various other sources
- “text with integrated media,” such as a webpage with audio and video clips or an interactive map
- “text with response options,” such as a discussion forum or invitation to email the author (300)

We recognize that these forms do not neatly map on to definitions of all types of digital texts. For instance, we wonder: is an entire website considered linear, because pages have an organizational structure and can be read alone, or nonlinear, because any one page on a site may have internal and external links that a reader can follow? Still, we think that these broad categories are useful. Dalton and Proctor argue, and we agree, that all forms of digital text offer readers a variety of new options for comprehension. Still, they cautiously claim that

Thinking through Text Types

- What kinds of texts do you read (news stories, novels, emails, websites, magazines)?
- How have you organized your reading across the various roles you play in your personal and professional life?
- At what point, when a text is available in both formats, do you make a conscious choice between print and digital text?
- How do you choose the device you will use to read?
- What factors figure into how you make all these choices?

in order for the role of the text to be expanded as we suggest, learners must avail themselves of the affordances offered. This is not a simple matter, given the evolving nature of digital tools and texts and the complexity of new literacies. (320)

Indeed, consideration of the “affordances offered” by digital texts—affordances such as links to outside resources, embedded audio and video, or other supplementary materials not offered in print—is incredibly important, and throughout this book, we argue that mindfulness plays a key role in the comprehension of digital texts.

We explore the first three of Dalton and Proctor’s (2008) types of texts in turn. However, because nearly all digital texts now offer some kind of response option via commenting, by communicating with the author, or by posting to social networks, we integrate our discussion of the fourth type, “text with response options,” recognizing that in the current landscape of digital tools and digital texts, reading and response are a recursive, nearly simultaneous process. For each of the three types—linear text in digital format, nonlinear text with hyperlinks, and fully integrated multimedia text—we describe what they look like and offer examples, documenting the response that may occur when readers engage with them.

Linear Text in Digital Format

Trevor, who is profiled in Figure 3.1, seems to draw a clear line between print and digital texts. For him “novels” are print and everything else is digital. During his interview, he never suggested that a book might come in digital form. Sienna (Figure 3.2), on the other hand, understands that with the introduction of e-readers and tablets, books can in fact be digital, and a linear text in digital format is a close cousin to a traditional novel. In other words, a linear text in digital format acts like the print books that both Sienna and Trevor describe—the books we know and love—but without the comfort of a cover and binding, or the smell of paper and ink.

For instance, we may be able to read the actual text of a classic work of literature that is available in the public domain, say *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, as a linear text in digital format because it is available through the Project Gutenberg website, Apple’s iBooks store, or, as Sienna notes, in the free Kindle library. We can download a copy, open it on our tablet or dedicated e-reader device, and then the text itself behaves very much like a book. There are no embedded links, though there may be some navigational and interactive features, such as links to chapters, dictionaries, and highlighting, that are available in this basic ebook format. The text, rather than appearing on paper, simply appears on screen instead.

Because these kinds of texts are meant to be read in a linear fashion, they align with our expectations of what typical books offer: one story, from beginning to end. Still, we return to the arguments on text complexity and close reading that

Figure 3.2. A profile of Sienna as a reader.

Sienna, a ninth grader, got a Kindle for Christmas a year ago, and though she didn't use it at first, once she found out that she could access a free library of books, it became her primary reading tool. She borrows a lot of books online, but she buys her favorites in print copy because, as she says, "I just like to have those around and read them because they're like old friends and they kind of show . . . different areas where you were when you were growing up." She likes to read "epic novels" and "deep philosophical things," and she says, "I think it's important to read stories. . . . It's a good way to think."

She likes to read series of books "that have a bit of a following . . . because you can find common ground with people." One series she has read is Harry Potter, and she has even read on Pottermore, a website that provides background on the books and authorial choices, and she uses this reading to "apply [her] knowledge . . . as another layer" to the novels.

Though Sienna traverses media easily, she understands a difference between her print and digital reading—and the affordances of each. For instance, she describes the difference between browsing on a Kindle and in the public library:

When I have a specific book, series, or author in mind, it is a lot easier for me to use a digital library because I can just type in the keywords and find it. But when I don't have anything particular in mind and I want to browse, I greatly prefer the physical library because you can just walk along the shelves and look at whatever catches your eye. One time during the summer I went back to the library and I just looked through all the books and wrote down all the names of the books that I wanted to read. And that's cool because it leads you to look at stuff that you might not have actually read, whereas if you're browsing [digitally] and you went to look by genre then you tend to be confined to a certain thing. And that gets monotonous.

Once she finds a text to read, either digitally or in print, Sienna will often download it on her Kindle, which she says is a "really good way to read more challenging stuff" because of the built-in dictionary feature. "Right now I'm reading *Brave New World* in the actual book form, and I found that there's a lot of words that I don't understand because they might be more medical terms, and so I've been writing them down, but it's easier when you can get the instant gratification of looking it up [in a digital version of the book]."

Sienna says she has a hard time keeping up with social media and doesn't use it a lot, but she uses email with her friends, and "I often share links to stuff about recent music and books." As she says, "If I see a post on something and I'm like whoa, this is really cool; I have not heard about this. Thank you, this website, for showing me this, and then if I really like it, I will forward it to my friends."

Sienna will click on headlines occasionally but she will also read the paper copy of the newspaper, which is how she keeps informed. However, she notes the benefits of online reading: "Online, you don't have the confines of actual physical space. So you can put as much information as you want on and you can find more information about articles." If she is interested in a topic, she will search for it using Google.

Sienna is familiar with transmedia stories, too. She encountered them on YouTube, where she learned of an "adaptation of Jane Austen novels into a modern day blog format and . . . social media to keep updates." She says the story is "really cool" and that it inspired her to read *Pride and Prejudice*.

Moving back and forth across reading genres and platforms, Sienna is an adept reader who makes intentional choices about what, when, and how to read. She recognizes the advantages and disadvantages of reading and interacting with various forms of text and seems to have found a balance that works for her as a highly motivated reader.

are presented in the NCTE policy brief: Lexile scores are only one measure of the text's complexity, and close reading by itself cannot guarantee that students deeply engage with the text. As we describe in Chapter 6, digital features can be employed in strategic ways as readers make their way through texts, supporting comprehension and meaning making. Thus, even though not much more than a regular book or article taken from page and put on-screen, linear text in digital format offers limited yet useful opportunities to interact with texts.



My family has always connected through reading. My mom, dad, brother, and I began initialing the front covers of books after we read so that we knew who to pass the book to next. When I first began dating my husband, I stood in front of his father's bookshelf and, realizing we had similar tastes, we too started sharing books. We talked about our reading and passed titles, as well as physical books, back and forth. Recently, he commented on a novel that he wanted to read, and I responded that I had read it via ebook. This marked a turn in our reading lives: because the novel did not sit on my nightstand, I forgot to mention it to him; because it was not a hard copy, I could not share it. I have noticed a similar shift in practice among my nuclear family, especially my dad and brother, who read digitally on e-readers on a regular basis. We share texts less often. My social network, however, shares more frequently. Lynne posts reviews on Goodreads that come to my feed; Heather asks for reading recommendations before her trip to the beach, and she gets a flurry of replies that fuel my own reading list; Mark comments on the newest YA book he has read and shares a list of top reads. These response options work for both print and digital texts, and they connect us as readers across time and space, just as my family has always connected.

Thinking through How to Find Books

- In what ways do you find books to read? In what ways do your students find books?
- How do you share your thoughts and ideas from those books? How do your students share?
- What is gained and what is lost for you when browsing books in digital form as compared to print form?
- Have you used Amazon, Google Books, or another source to preview a book before borrowing it from the library or purchasing it in print or digital form?

As Kristen's experience demonstrates, response and sharing have been a part of the process for engaged readers since long before television book clubs popularized them. We've each heard some version of the old adage that "a reader is never done with a book until it is shared." From reviews on Amazon or other booksellers' websites to the types of personal recommendations that Kristen describes coming through the Facebook feed, we are finding more and more ways to use digital tools as a means of sharing our linear reading experiences.

Nonlinear Text with Hyperlinks

In contrast to a linear text in digital format, we should expect a nonlinear text with hyperlinks to be a text that is specifically designed for reading in a computer-mediated environment. In fact, it has to be read that way—on-screen and with links as a hypertext—to fully appreciate it. While we may be able to enjoy a work of hypertext fiction after printing out every single page and assembling them into one document, this is not the purpose of hypertext. Hypertext provides readers and writers with the opportunity to collaborate in the meaning-making process, clicking forward and backward on links. This interactivity becomes a defining characteristic of hypertext, and perhaps without our realizing it, we associate hypertext reading with digital reading. Trevor certainly does as he describes the differences between the “effects” of books and reading on the iPad or computer. For him, and for many of us, nonlinear texts with hyperlinks can lead to distractions, and we must consider the strategies we use to comprehend such texts.

There have been many versions of hypertext over the years, and one of the first professional books for English teachers to explore connections between hypertext and the English classroom is Wilhelm and Friedemann’s *Hyperlearning: Where Projects, Inquiry, and Technology Meet* (1998). They argue:

We believe that to be literate in the twenty-first century, students must become composers and readers of hypermedia. They must understand its possibilities, uses, and design. Since our future texts, even more so than our current ones, will be hypertextual, students will need to understand the conventions and construction of such texts. (p. 20)

While some hypertext theorists might quibble with the intersecting use of terms such as *hypermedia* and *hypertext*, Wilhelm and colleagues made the case for teaching the “conventions and construction” of hypertext nearly two decades ago, and it is a type of text that many of us still struggle to implement in our reading instruction. To what extent do we provide our students with specific opportunities to truly read and comprehend hypertextual documents? To what extent do we model that process for them? How do we engage all readers in these kinds of texts? How do we help students like Trevor learn to stay focused in a sea

Thinking through Hypertext

- When did you first read a nonlinear text? Perhaps it was a Choose Your Own Adventure book in childhood. Perhaps it was a website. What do you remember about this experience?
- How has hypertext changed the manner in which you read? Do you, like Trevor, get distracted when reading online? What techniques do you use to keep yourself focused?
- Have you engaged fully in a work of hypertext fiction or nonfiction? Or are you more apt to read individual articles and webpages that link to yet more pages, though not as an intentionally “whole” text?
- How do you talk about hypertext reading with your students? What strategies do you employ? What have they suggested to you?

of distractions? How do we help students like Sienna understand and appreciate hypertext fiction in the same way that they enjoy a regular novel?

Reading Instruction for All Students acknowledges that these kinds of digital texts are different. Status updates contain links to articles that contain links to even more articles. Wikipedia is filled with internal references inside its articles, as well as outside resources listed at the end of each article. Bloggers and journalists might include a link as both a de facto citation and a rhetorical move in writing. And anyone who has clicked on something that appeared to be legitimate but turns out to be an ad knows that some links are, indeed, more nefarious than others. We must consider how to teach adolescents to choose and interact mindfully with nonlinear texts with hyperlinks. If we do not, they may get lost, as we like to say, “down the rabbit hole.”

In short, hypertext exists across many reading spaces, and its uses are nearly endless, as Kristen shares here.



As much as I enjoy losing myself in a book, hypertext dominates my reading life. I follow links on social networks, and I dig down into the links of the articles that I find. I share important links myself on these same networks. I subscribe to various blogs and receive their posts via RSS and email, and when I am really interested in what the author has said, I dig down into the links they provide. I often respond via the comment tool on the original post, sharing my own interpretation or experience. I receive and share links with my colleagues and family, and I dig down to investigate the validity of the claims. When appropriate, I engage in conversation about the texts, both virtually and in person. The ability to immediately and easily dig down and to instantaneously respond is part of the beauty of hypertext.

As with the linear texts she described earlier, Kristen demonstrates the ways in which she shares and responds to various forms of hypertext. Again, it is difficult to separate the idea of “reading” from that of “writing” or “response” because these activities work in parallel with one another. Kristen’s ability to interrogate a particular text by following links, offering commentary, and sharing new links with her social networks demonstrates just three ways in which hypertext has changed her reading experience to one of immediate relevance. The ability to quickly access a text via hyperlink, as well as additional related texts from more links, makes this form of reading particularly powerful when pursuing new topics and ideas.

A Text with Integrated Media

As tablets and e-readers have caught up with the capabilities of the Web, we now have access to ebooks and magazines that have the same types of interactive features as websites. Rather than simply being used as a technological enhancement, audio and video that are truly integrated into a text are crucial to the story itself, and readers need to engage with this multimedia to understand the story.

Sienna describes one example of a multimedia text: a transmedia story based on the novels of Jane Austen that uses video, blogs, and social media to move the action. Another example, *Inanimate Alice* (www.inanimatealice.com/), is described on the site as “a reading-from-the-screen experience for the digital generation” that “uses text, images, music, sound effects, puzzles and games to illustrate and enhance the narrative” (“About” section). Like a book, *Inanimate Alice* has chapters that the reader progresses through, each revealing more about Alice and her family. Fleming (2013), a high school library and media specialist, describes the combination of media in this way:

The interactivity and narrative are not distinct from one another. In the case of *Inanimate Alice*, the interactive elements simply cannot be separated from the story. Whether it is controlling Alice’s Baxi (her handheld gaming device) or communicating with Brad (her virtual friend on the Baxi), the embedded technology enhances the narrative and helps it to unfold in manifold directions under the reader’s impulse. It is this that makes Alice a truly unique digital reading experience. (p. 374)

Texts with integrated media can also come as long-form journalism. For instance, the *New York Times* piece “Snow Fall: The Avalanche at Tunnel Creek” (Branch, 2012) won a Pulitzer in 2013, and many news pieces now include short video clips along with alphabetic text as well. When arriving on the “Snow Fall” website, viewers are greeted with an image that shows snow blowing across the ground, and the title fades in. Then, scrolling down, readers encounter the text of the article, including certain sentences that are lightly highlighted, with a video icon next to them. Clicking on that sentence will play a video embedded next to the paragraph. Other features of the online story include a map, archival figures, slideshows, and links to additional pages in the story. Reading the “Snow Fall” story is inherently a multimodal, interactive experience.

Like these Web-based reading experiences, Larson (2009) explains the potential for the interactive features of ebooks:

Many e-books employ multimodal features—such as video, audio, and hyperlinks—as well as interactive tools. Such tools invite readers to physically interact with the text

through inserting, deleting, or replacing text; marking passages by highlighting, underlining, or crossing out words; adding comments by inserting notes, attaching files, or recording audio comments; and manipulating the page format, text size, and screen layout. (p. 255)

Whether in ebook form or embedded in a website, these features create new challenges for readers. We have long understood the text features that constitute well-structured texts, especially in nonfiction. Headings, captions, graphics, bold print: all of these text features have the potential to contribute to a reader's ability to make meaning. Will interactive ebooks or immersive websites rely on similar features, or will new ones emerge? Gamers have long searched for hidden "Easter eggs" in their quests in order to find extended narratives, additional characters, and other rewards, and now interactive ebooks and transmedia stories often employ similar techniques. How do we manage our reading experience when we are moving across various forms of media and when navigating those various forms is crucial to our overall understanding of the text?

Texts with integrated media are, as Fleming (2013) states, "truly unique," yet the popularity of such texts is growing, and educators see value in them for learning. NCTE recently published its first multimedia text (Gere, Homan, Parsons, Spooner, & Uzogara, 2014), and we suspect it will not be the last.



The preface of *Text Complexity: Supporting Student Readers* [NCTE, 2014] invited me to read the book "from beginning to end" or "in bits and snatches." Typically when I read professional texts, I skim the entire book before going back to focus in on particular chapters, so I immediately thought that I would be a "beginning to end" reader of this ebook. Four pages into Chapter 1, I clicked a link—and I knew my reading of this text would be different. As I moved through the book, I found myself watching teacher reflections presented in video form. I accepted the authors' invitation to take notes in my e-reader on my own reading of a passage—and I clicked through to the appendix, where I could compare my notes to author reflections. I snapped a picture and sent it to Troy with my notes. I jumped around, reading in "bits and snatches" and interacting with the text and its multimedia components in my own meaningful path.

It is these texts with integrated media options that provide us with the most excitement as we think about the future of reading instruction yet at the same time

cause us the most concern when we consider the implementation of CCSS. The NCTE policy statement suggests that teachers ask students to consider the unique features of these kinds of texts, and indeed we must also ask students to reflect on how they engage with these features to make meaning. In fact, the multimedia components constitute a significant portion of the meaning-making process. Without them, the text would not be complete.

Whether a linear text in a digital format, a nonlinear text with hyperlinks, or a text with media integrated throughout—and whether presented as an ebook, a website, or an app—we must acknowledge the changing shape of texts that our students encounter inside and outside of school.

Thinking through Multimedia

- Have you read a text that has multimedia embedded? Did you feel that the multimedia was a critical component of the text, helping you make meaning of the whole?
- How is your reading of this type of text different from reading linear texts? What do you focus on first? Text? Media? Why?
- As we invite students to read, view, and participate with these types of multimedia texts, what skills will they need to bring as readers, listeners, and viewers?

Where We Read: Apps and Web



Throughout the day, I scan my email, not just to put out fires, but to see if any new links have come in. Fortunately, the recent update to my Gmail app makes this task even easier because of the tabs it creates for my primary inbox as well as “Social,” “Updates,” and “Forums” sections. This top-level organization allows me to skim the total number of emails I have and decide if I want to dive in to any particular one for more information.

At other points, I will employ two different apps to keep up on my current professional reading from the “Edublogosphere” and “Twitterverse.” First, I use the RSS aggregator Feedly, which allows me to quickly skim and scan many news sources, blogs, and custom Google Alerts that I have set up for myself, including ones on “education and writing” as well as “education and technology.” Because of Feedly’s layout, I am not able to read the entire article at once, at least not easily, and sometimes I will click an ellipsis icon to select a way to share an article. I can send it to Pocket, a separate app that will allow me to read the entire article later, even if I am offline. Or I can send the article via email, often to myself so I remember to click on it later.

My other main reading app, Flipboard, functions like a virtual magazine. By connecting my Facebook and Twitter accounts, as well as selecting from many existing Flipboard magazines and custom search terms, I am able to see a number of headlines, introductions to articles, and, if included in the original piece online, a representative photo. Flipboard, as its name implies, allows me to flip through pages, much like reading a newspaper or magazine. Unlike those print sources, Flipboard is constantly updating. Rather than looking at a list of headlines, as with Feedly, or a series of links, as on Twitter, Flipboard allows me to get a much better sense of what I am

about to read. Along with sections such as “NPR,” “*The Atlantic*,” and “*The Daily Beast*,” I also delve into the latest tech news, the #engchat Twitter stream, and, just for fun, “*The Onion*” and “*I Can Has Cheezburger*.” If I find something I want to read in more detail, I will save it to Pocket or send it to email.

These apps keep me organized as my reading life spans multiple websites and social networks, allowing me to move effortlessly from one reading experience to the next.

In this section, we differentiate between two types of digital reading, each powered in the same manner: reading on the Web and reading with applications, known more widely as apps. Interestingly enough, the actual text we read, albeit in digital form, is the same. When Extensible Markup Language (XML) and Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) became the new standards for webpage design in the early 2000s, hypertext as we knew it went through a separation of content and form. While neither of us is a computer programmer or has intricate knowledge of how all of this works, we have been informed by the work of cultural anthropologist Michael Wesch and his intriguing video, “The Machine Is Us/Using Us (final version)” (2007), which we strongly encourage you to view before you consider the implications of Web-based text on your students’ reading.

In short, XML, CSS, and the opportunities created by Web browsers and mobile devices for content delivery provide us with a new set of reading opportunities, even if we are looking at the same actual text. For instance, when Troy loads Feedly on his phone, he sees a preview of a new blog post, which he may choose to save to Pocket. Later, when he has more time to read, he logs on to his Pocket account in a Web browser, where he finds the same text in a different form. Content can be delivered anywhere; form—including fonts, color schemes, and other readability functions—can be adjusted based on the device being used. Because content is separated from form, we are able to view text in a variety of ways.

As an example, look at how one of Troy’s recent blog posts appears across a variety of platforms (Figure 3.3). First is a screenshot as viewed through a Web browser on a computer, and this represents a fairly standard view of a typical blog, complete with formatting and additional widgets placed there by the blogger (Figure 3.3a).

Next is the same text from Troy’s blog, though he has activated Evernote’s Clearly tool, which, as described on the company’s website, “makes blog posts, articles and webpages clean and easy to read” (Figure 3.3b). While Troy works hard to keep ads off his site, we have all experienced websites with extreme amounts of clutter, and Clearly, quite simply, wipes away all the clutter to make the reading experience very much like looking at a single article on paper.

Figure 3.3. Screenshots of the same blog post in multiple reading platforms.



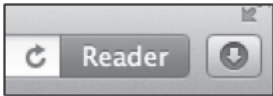
Third, we look at this same blog post through the lens of Feedly, an RSS reader that allows you to subscribe to the news feeds coming from many websites, blogs, and other forms of media such as videos, podcasts, and photos (Figure 3.3c). Feedly is available both as a website, viewable in any Web browser, as well as an app for use on smartphones and tablets.

Finally, we see the same blog post as it is saved to Pocket (Figure 3.3d). Pocket allows you to read the article in full at a later time, even without an Internet connection, but it also allows you to go online to read the original material in Web form if you do have an Internet connection.

Even for those of us accustomed to reading digital text across many devices, this practice of managing when, where, and how to read a digital text can be overwhelming at first. Some apps work across browsers, devices, and platforms. Others require a particular browser such as Firefox or Google Chrome, or a particular device such as an iOS or Android operating system. But once you are able to swiftly manage your reading experiences with these tools, they can become invaluable as a part of your daily reading habit, allowing deeper engagement with many texts.

As we think about just this batch of digital reading tools, we must consider a few teaching points. First, digital text is malleable and can come to us in a variety of forms. Helping students understand which websites and apps are most useful for them as individual readers requires that we, as adult readers, become at least passingly familiar with the options afforded by each. This does not mean that you as teacher must become expert in each and every one of these technologies. Having a basic understanding of how each one works is essential, however, and we capture some of those features in Figure 3.4. Second, and more important, we need to be even more vigilant in our efforts to help students find a variety of perspectives on their topics. This includes perspectives from mass media, the scientific community, and individual bloggers, as well as from both ends of the political spectrum. The tools may bring us new items to read, yet critical thinking is even more important now as our sources continue to multiply.

Figure 3.4. Apps for digital reading.

<p>Evernote’s Clearly http://evernote.com/clearly</p> <p>As an extension of the popular organizational tool Evernote, Clearly takes away the clutter from webpages, making the articles themselves the main focus without advertisements, sidebars, and other distractions. This browser extension is available for Google Chrome, Firefox, and Opera. Safari has a similar feature with its “Reader” function that will show up in the URL bar for any website that can be read in this mode.</p> 	<p>Flipboard http://flipboard.com</p> <p>As an app designed for mobile devices, Flipboard describes itself as a “magazine.” In this sense, a reader is able to open up the app and quickly browse through different sections; these sections can be prepopulated by Flipboard, or users can curate their own sections by adding various news sources, blogs, or other RSS feeds. Recently, Flipboard added functionality to take items found on the Web through normal browsing, and then press a button to “Flip it” into your own custom magazine. Flipboard is now available for iOS, Android, Windows, and BlackBerry. Flipboard also allows you to quickly share items via email or social networks.</p>
<p>Other options like Clearly to reduce screen clutter:</p> <p>Readability (cross platform) Enjoy Reading (Firefox only) Purify (Google Chrome only)</p>	<p>Other options like Flipboard:</p> <p>Pulse (iOS, Android) News360 (iOS, Android, Windows) Zite (iOS, Android, Windows) Google Currents (iOS, Android)</p>
<p>Feedly http://feedly.com/i/welcome</p> <p>With the demise of Google Reader in 2013, a number of RSS tools looked to fill its place. Feedly immediately rose to the top of many bloggers’ lists as an alternative. With the ability to read RSS feeds through a browser or using the Feedly app (iOS, Android, Kindle Fire, Windows), you can keep up with a wide variety of news sources as easily as you skim your email. Feedly allows for quick views of individual stories and the ability to easily share these stories across social networks and other reading apps. The unique ability to read via browser or mobile app makes Feedly and other tools like it especially useful.</p>	<p>Pocket https://getpocket.com</p> <p>Like Feedly, Pocket is a tool that works across multiple devices and platforms. Allowing the user to bookmark content through a browser, Pocket then loads up a reading list for later that can be accessed online or off. With extensions for Firefox and Chrome, as well as apps for iOS, Android, and Windows, Pocket provides a good way to save the mid- and long-form articles from the web for reading at a more leisurely pace later.</p>
<p>Other options like Feedly:</p> <p>Inoreader (iOS, Android, online) FlowReader (Android, online) NewsBlur (iOS, Android, online)</p>	<p>Other options like Pocket:</p> <p>Diigo (online, iOS, Android) Instapaper (online, iOS, Android) PaperSpan (online, Android) Readability (online, Android, iOS)</p>

How We Read: Engaged and Connected

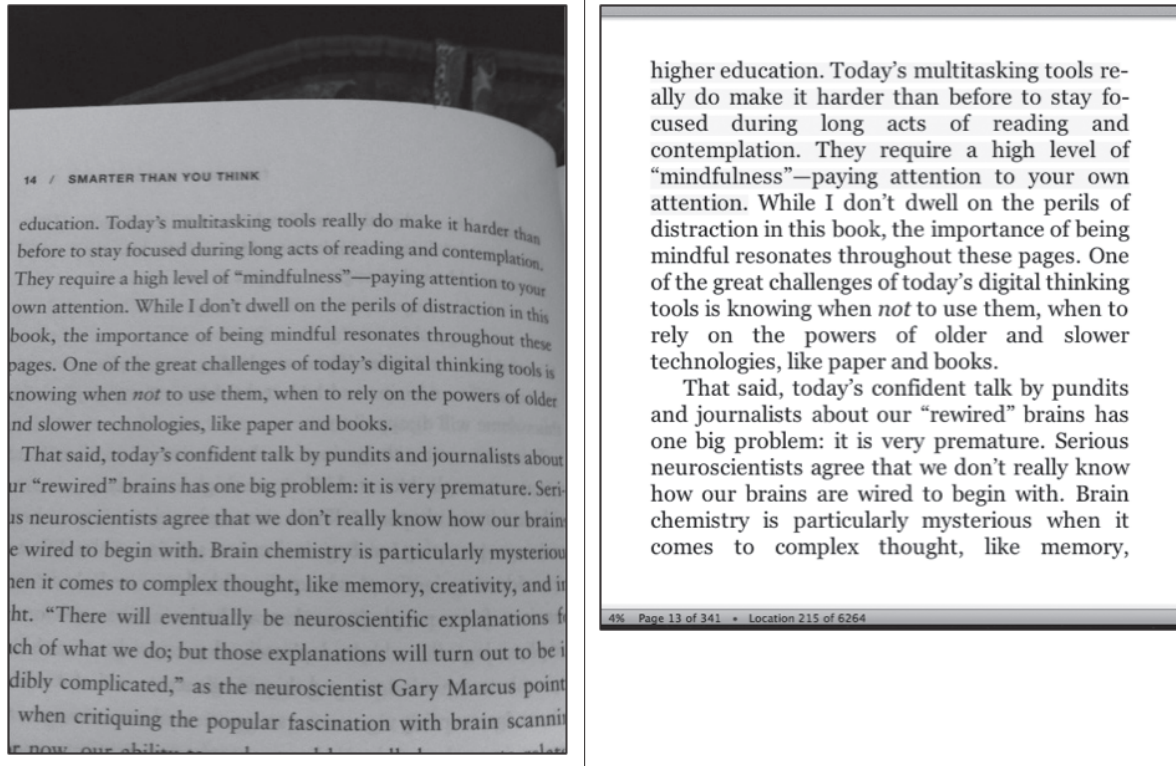


Troy told me that he was reading Clive Thompson's book *Smarter Than You Think*, and I decided to order it in print so I could share it more easily with my colleagues at work. As I was reading on the train, a particular passage caught my attention, and I knew that I wanted to discuss it with Troy. I quickly pulled out my phone, snapped a picture, and dropped it into a shared photo stream so that Troy could see it [see Figure 3.5]. During our next conversation about the book, we talked about the passage, which Troy found by searching in his digital version of the text. The idea embedded in that shared note guided much of our future conversations about Thompson's book, and it sparked us to invite the author to a Google Hangout, where we further developed our understanding of the text.

As we collaborated on this book over the course of a year, we shared our reading in a variety of ways. We described one example in Chapter 1 using Crocodoc for annotating PDF texts. At other times, while using Flipboard or Feedly to catch up on professional reading, Troy would forward an article to Kristen via email; Kristen, on the other hand, frequently shared links on Facebook and Twitter with Troy. Yet sometimes our reading was in print, and in those cases we used our phones to share in-the-moment thoughts, as Kristen describes. In the case of the Thompson book, Kristen shared only the text, which sparked Troy's own reading. She snapped a picture from the print version of the book (Figure 3.5a), sent it to Troy, and he then pulled up the quote in his Kindle app (Figure 3.5b). You will see this quote—the exact digital text highlighted here, copied straight from the Kindle app—later in this chapter.

In another instance, when Kristen was reading the newly released *Reading Unbound* (Wilhelm & Smith, 2014), which was available only in print format, she annotated a picture using Skitch before texting it to Troy, who did not yet have a copy of the book (Figure 3.6). Using an app that relies on optical character recognition (OCR), Troy was able to pull in the quote from the book that you read in Chapter 2. While this particular method often requires a little editing to clean up typos, it is still a highly effective way to share quotes with others.

Throughout this chapter, we have shared our reading practices, identifying *what* and *where* we read and the underlying choices we make in those areas. Now, as we focus in this section on *how* we read, we consider once again the NCTE policy brief and its roots in a rich history of research into reading instruction. The brief suggests that teachers

Figure 3.5. Figures of print and Kindle versions of Thompson's book.

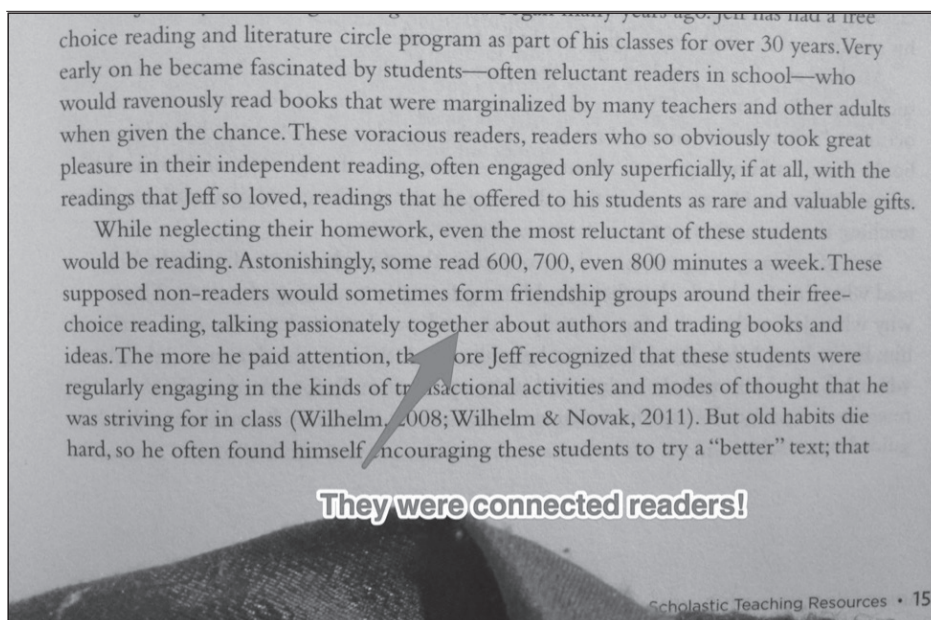
a. Snapshot of Kristen's reading on the train sent to Troy via photo stream.

b. Snapshot of Troy's reading on the Kindle, highlighting and copying the quote.

- Recognize the role of motivation
- Engage in performative response
- Read multiple texts
- Foster engagement
- Encourage choice
- Demonstrate differences in digital and visual texts
- Connect reading and writing
- Develop meaningful discussion

We understand these recommendations to evolve from notions of what adult (expert) readers do, and we know that embedded in this type of instruction will be attention to the strategies employed by expert readers. As research in reading

Figure 3.6. Kristen’s snapshot from *Reading Unbound: Why Kids Need to Read What They Want—And Why We Should Let Them* by Jeffrey D. Wilhelm and Michael W. Smith, with Sharon Fransen (2014).



digital texts has revealed—and as both of the profiled readers in this chapter, Sienna and Trevor, demonstrate—these strategies may be different when reading digitally. One key difference we have uncovered as we reflect on our own practices, as well as those of the adolescents in our study, is the increased feasibility of shared reading through digital tools. In short, digital tools connect readers in ways that could not have been imagined before they became available. Therefore, we now outline the specific practices that our surveys of 804 students, 23 interviews, and our own thinking about reading have revealed.

What Are the Practices of Connected Reading?

As we talked with teens about how they read digitally, it became clear that their notion of finding texts is multifaceted, and we now understand from them that “encountering” a text is a separate practice from truly “engaging with” a text. Additionally, we see a practice of “evaluating” that occurs through initial encounters and ongoing engagements with a text. This type of evaluation equates to the idea of “finding value in” and is in addition to notions of judgment about the quality of a text.

Figure 3.7 articulates our view and provides definitions for the practices we learned from these students. Even though they are in chart form, we encourage you to think of these practices not as linear steps in a process but rather as recursive. They are described in more detail in Chapter 4.

Over time we have **encountered** texts in a variety of ways: a newspaper drops on our walkway; we go to the library to find a book; our teacher hands us a copy of a short story; we flip through a magazine to locate the article highlighted on the cover. Today we have many more possibilities as to when and where we may encounter a text. In some cases, we receive the information passively. As both Trevor and Sienna describe, email accounts and social networks bring texts directly to mobile devices and Web browsers with virtually no effort from a reader. In his reflections, Troy describes how various curation tools (such as Feedly) do the work

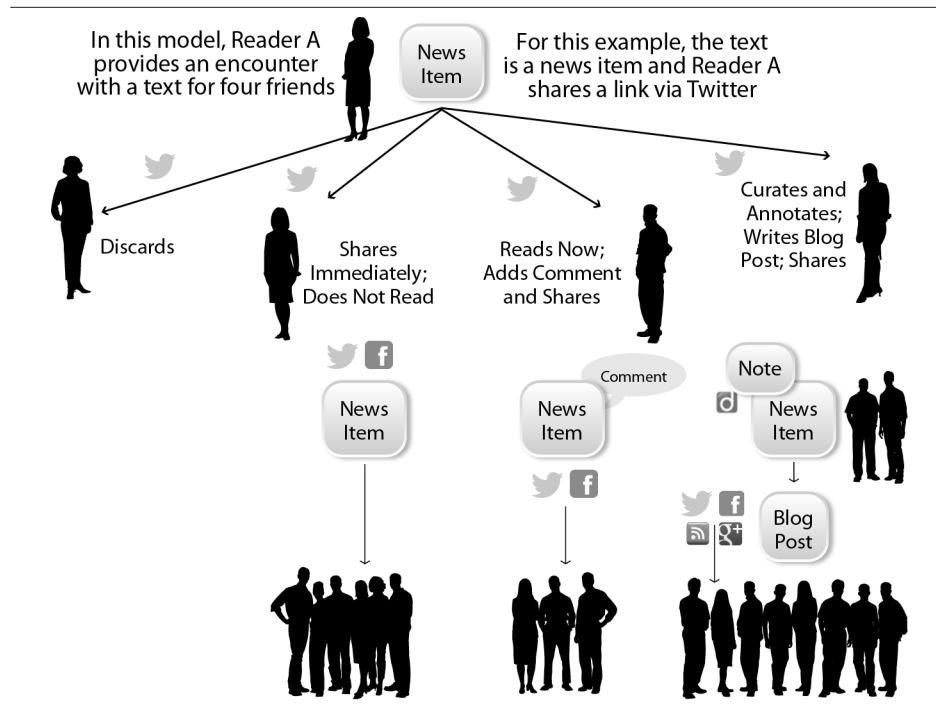
Figure 3.7. Practices of Connected Reading.

Encountering a Text	
Receiving	Getting a digital text by means of engaging with a website or app (what’s in the headlines) or via link from a friend or colleague
Surfing	Skimming and scanning the Internet with little intention, typically for leisure
Stumbling	Following related links or recommendations from social networks, Web services (such as StumbleUpon), or curated websites
Searching	Seeking information actively with specific search terms; comparing and contrasting various websites
Engaging with a Text	
Deciding	Filtering texts to be read or discarded; deciding when and how to read
Curating	Organizing texts for reading and archiving; establishing additional feeds based on current feeds
Reading	Skimming, scanning, digging in; using multimedia; annotating; responding; interacting; monitoring; reading beyond a given text
Sharing	Offering public response to a text; posting or sending it to others
Evaluating a Text	
Determining value	Considering interest, overarching intentions, and immediate purpose to identify how useful the text might be in the moment and in the future; situating the text in a broader, ongoing conversation
Judging	Critiquing the quality of a text (both content and form) as it compares to other similar texts (asking, “Is it a good or bad example of [this particular genre]?”)
Employing digital tools	Identifying and utilizing the most appropriate tools to read, annotate, respond to, and share a digital text
Managing distraction	Self-regulating one’s attention related to the specific reading task and digital tool in use

of scouring the Web to find relevant texts and deliver them to subscribers. Rather than actively searching for new items to read, we let others (or, perhaps, a search engine's automated tools) do this work for us, and we trust their recommendations. For example, we may skim through our friends' status updates, occasionally clicking on a link. We may get an email newsletter and follow a link to an interesting story. In this way, we consume content shared by others—and others consume content shared by us.

Figure 3.8 shows an example of how sharing leads to encounters within a network of readers. Though Connected Readers often encounter texts that are shared by other readers in their network, they sometimes need to seek content through active search strategies. As Trevor does when he searches purposefully for content related to discussions in Global History, or as Sienna does when she types a particular title into her Kindle library, active searching is an important practice in finding digital texts and in helping readers to move outside of their “filter bubbles” that are limited by friendship circles and the algorithmic programs of the Web (Pariser, 2011). Whether we are researching professional texts for a new article, searching for information on a personally interesting topic, or curious to answer a question raised during dinner conversation, we actively find new texts to read.

Figure 3.8. A sample of “encountering” in one network of readers.



Often these active searches inspire us to set up new feeds, which will in turn deliver us content wherever we choose to read it.

Once we encounter a digital text, we can **engage** with it in a variety of ways. As one of Kristen's reflections indicates, we are often inundated with texts, and probably the first action we take is to determine a path for any given text. This practice involves deciding whether to discard a text completely, to read it immediately, or to save it for later reading (on either the original device or a different device).

Evaluation, or finding value in a text, is a practice that expert readers employ throughout their process of reading. As you (or any reader) determine that a text is one you want to read, you evaluate its value in relation to your purpose for reading. As you decide whether to read it now or later, you consider your immediate interest and context. If you decide to read later, you may curate by saving the text to an app (as Troy describes with his use of Pocket) or by opening a separate tab on your browser (as both Trevor and Kristen do).

If you decide to read immediately, you may employ more traditional reading strategies, such as scanning, skimming, and constructing the gist, and you may also engage in digital opportunities, such as viewing embedded videos, accessing a dictionary feature, and clicking links. As you read, you monitor comprehension and evaluate choices about how they may aid your understanding. You may click links to visit original sources or critique the context in which the work is published. You may decide to create an RSS feed that will deliver new texts to your inbox so that you can read beyond the original text. In short, you evaluate, assigning value to every text you encounter. All of these practices of evaluating a text fuel your reading, and they also contribute to your decision to share the text with other readers in your network.

As the reflections and profiles in this chapter reveal, sharing is key to being a Connected Reader. Whether posting links on Facebook, writing reviews on Goodreads, emailing ideas to others, or even texting a picture of the book to a colleague, public response to reading extends the engagement with a text. And it is through practices of sharing that we often encounter new texts.

Conclusion: Reading Mindfully in a Digital Age

We have articulated practices of Connected Readers, yet we acknowledge the issue brought up by Trevor, who admits that when reading digitally, he is often distracted. In fact, authors such as Bauerlein (2008), who makes claims about teenagers in the "dumbest generation," and Carr (2010), who suggests that society is swimming in an intellectual "shallows" by using the Internet, cite such distraction in making their arguments. However, we understand that digital tools are ubiquitous, and as such, we cannot dismiss them from our lives. Instead, we must develop what Clive

Thompson calls “mindfulness” (2013). Though we shared this passage earlier in the snapshot that Kristen sent Troy as she read Thompson’s book on the train (Figure 3.5a), we feel it worth repeating here as evidence of our argument:

I’m certain that many of these fears are warranted. It has always been difficult for us to maintain mental habits of concentration and deep thought; that’s precisely why societies have engineered massive social institutions (everything from universities to book clubs and temples of worship) to encourage us to keep it up. It’s part of why only a relatively small subset of people become regular, immersive readers, and part of why an even smaller subset go on to higher education. Today’s multitasking tools really do make it harder than before to stay focused during long acts of reading and contemplation. They require a high level of “mindfulness”—paying attention to your own attention. (p. 13, Kindle edition, p. 14 print edition)

This call for “mindfulness” is echoed by a number of other writers engaged in discussions about how to use the Internet effectively, most notably Shirky (2008, 2011), Rheingold (2012), and Davidson (2011), and we believe it is the key to the successful practices of Connected Readers.

In many ways, the practices we outline in this chapter are not new: we have determined paths for individual texts that we encounter; we have curated print books in personal libraries (as Sienna describes); we have read purposefully and mindfully; we have shared our reading in book clubs and with friends and family. What is new, or at least very different, in a digital age is the agency afforded to all readers, especially teen readers, in this process. We encounter many kinds of texts on a daily basis, and we engage with those texts in a variety of ways. Most important, we are connected to other readers at every stage of the game. The context is broader and the opportunities more overwhelming.

As the NCTE policy statement affirms:

Research shows that reading comprehension depends on a more complex approach. Specifically, reading comprehension results from the integration of two models, text-based and situation-based. The text-based model focuses on the way words are organized into sentences, paragraphs, and whole texts. The situation model refers to the meaning that results from integration of the text-based approach with the reader’s prior knowledge and goals. (*RLAS*, p. xii)

We believe we need to adjust our idea of reading so that our students can engage more fully as readers of digital and print texts. For us it is not an either/or (print vs. digital) but a both/and. We realize that the canonical and contemporary books we distribute in school in print form are merely one of the kinds of texts that teens encounter. We imagine that you teach traditional reading strategies that are very useful for these texts, as well as for the texts students find outside of school. At the same time, we must also teach adolescents to think critically and carefully to use digital tools to engage deeply in the texts they will encounter daily.